



Art Is ...

California
Arts Council

FACE OF THE ARTS

CELEBRATING CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

Art is . . . people, pure and simple. With this 2004 calendar the California Arts Council continues its “**Face of the Arts**” project, an awareness campaign that puts the spotlight on people, underscoring the impact arts funding has on the lives of all Californians. The calendar includes individuals who make arts as well as arts administrators, vital links connecting artists with the people of California and those who visit the state.

Had we more space we would have included presenters and producers, arts technicians, volunteers, donors, and the children who eagerly embrace art in all its myriad forms. We hope the 12 individuals pictured in this calendar reflect some of the diversity of the state and range of disciplines, from European forms to traditional folk art. The faces say it all. Art is people, pure and simple.

“Art is” statements are found on the back of each month. To view and participate in the “Face of the Arts” project go to www.cac.ca.gov

Funded by William James Association



Photo: Stephen Harvey

Art Is...



Meri Nana-Ana Danquah

January 2004

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S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	www.cac.ca.gov			1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



Meri Nana-Ana Danquah
Writer and Poet
Los Angeles

In indigenous cultures, art is what you do everyday, live with everyday. It's the bowl you eat from that 100 years from now will be in a museum. The more removed from everyday life, the more inaccessible art becomes, the more difficult it is to practice it and the more

doomed the world becomes. Art is expression. It's about making a statement about yourself and the world around you. For me art and activism are closely linked. I make statements through my art. Fiction allows me to write about alternative ways of being in the world and sharing that with others. I can't imagine being without creating.

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Photo: No Man's Land, Hong Kong Cultural Center



Brenda Wong Aoki

February 2004

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Arts Council



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	www.cac.ca.gov					



Brenda Wong Aoki
Theatre Solo Artist
San Francisco

 Brenda Wong Aoki has mesmerized audiences worldwide. With live music by composer and husband Mark Izu, Aoki combines Japanese and Western theatre, voice and movement. Currently she is weaving stories from the Pacific Rim with Cherokee stories.

“I’m one of those artists married to another artist and it’s hard financially. We have a son and a mortgage. Will we make it to retirement? Six months ago we went into a deep retreat to figure it out. We realized this is our calling this lifetime. It’s what we do best. We create stories and music that we feel contribute to the betterment of the world. After 9/11 people were hungering and thirsting for art, healing on a different level that can only happen through art. We will stay and keep on making art. As a society we grow food and build cars and provide health care. We artists create food for the spirit.”

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Louise Music

March 2004

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Arts Council



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	www.cac.ca.gov		



Louise Music
Arts Learning Coordinator
Alliance for Arts Learning Leadership
Alameda County Office of Education

 think the basic dilemma in America is this: things aren't working in society and things aren't working in our schools. Art is the critical missing piece in both arenas. People think of art as something special and

different. This limits our ability to live our lives well. The arts are central to students' ability to learn, to their ability to live meaningful lives.

In Alameda County, as throughout the U.S., March is *Art Is Education* month. We want to reveal the critical role of art in learning. We tell the story that art *is* education. In making art we solve problems, collaborate with others, take risks, make mistakes, make choices, stretch, put it all together in an imaginative way. This is what education is about.

California



Arts Council



Art Is ...



Ramon Romero

April 2004

California



Arts Council



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	www.cac.ca.gov			1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	



Ramon Romero
Harp Virtuoso and Director of the Ensemble
Cuerdas de Fuego
Modesto

The harp is the national instrument of Paraguay and my passion for it began at age three when I began tuning my father's instrument. They tell me I had perfect pitch and cried when a string was out of tune. I

started learning at nine and my first public performance (with a borrowed harp) was at 14. I played so hard that I went home with blood under my fingernails and my pockets stuffed with money. We were poor and I had to explain to my mother how I got the money. I made my first harp from guitar strings and an old window frame. My passion is South American folk music, which is evolutionary and always changing, but the feelings and expressions involved never change. I'm sad because I don't know who will carry on and save it for the future.

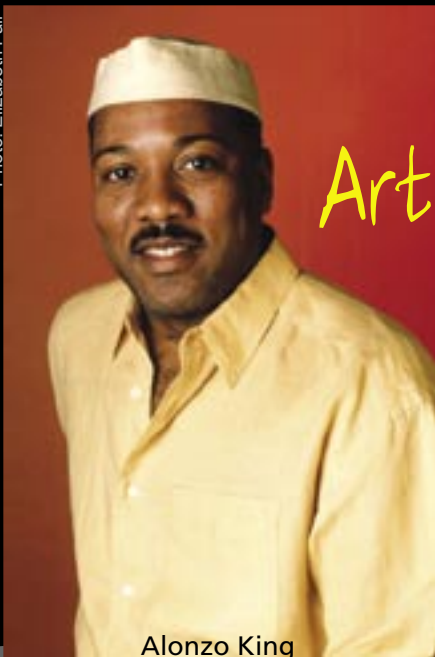
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Photo: Elizabeth Fall



Art Is ...

Alonzo King

May 2004

California



Arts Council



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			www.cac.ca.gov			1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23/30	24/31	25	26	27	28	29



Alonzo King
Artistic Director
LINES Ballet
San Francisco

The idea that artists are a privileged and select few, and that art is something separate from our everyday living is harmful. That thinking renders artists sentimental pathetics, and art, something that is unnecessary. It isolates artists from social vigor and determines everyone

else to be uncreative brutes. Anyone who is giving the best of themselves to any endeavor is participating in art. Whether that is agriculture, money making, child raising, self-improvement, or basket weaving. All of us on this planet spend our time making and doing. If it is to be the best making and doing, it has to involve art. Art is knowledge. It pervades everything. Art is intellectual virtue. Observe everything that is made or created, done or performed, how poorly or how well, and it will tell you of our need for art.

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Art Is ...

Christi Gabaldon

June 2004

California



Arts Council




S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

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Christi Gabaldon
Basketweaver
Santa Rosa

 saw a basket at a trade feast at the Marin Miwok Museum in Novato and asked the maker, Edward Willie, if he would teach me. I'm Mishewal Wappo tribe. There are at least 500 of us in

Sonoma County. My Dad was Navajo. I became aware of my heritage when I was growing up because we were always visiting one elder or another. I didn't want to learn basketweaving until I saw Edward Willie's cradle basket. My materials are sedge and willow. Edward makes me go out and pick them. He said he wouldn't show me how to weave until I picked them. Now I love digging by the rivers to get these materials. I'm weaving a three-rod basket, which isn't done much anymore. It means everything to me to do this. I don't see this as art so much as what I should be doing, as just part of life.

California



Arts Council



Art Is ...



Eugene Rodriguez

July 2004

California



Arts Council



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	www.cac.ca.gov			1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



Eugene Rodriguez
Executive Director
Los Cenzontles
Mexican Arts Center
San Pablo

Art is the territory where we can safely express boundless joy, communicate with others in a profoundly intimate manner and console ourselves in the face of the difficulties life

presents us. Art has impacted my life by providing me a musical vocabulary with which to express myself, connect with others and make a difference.

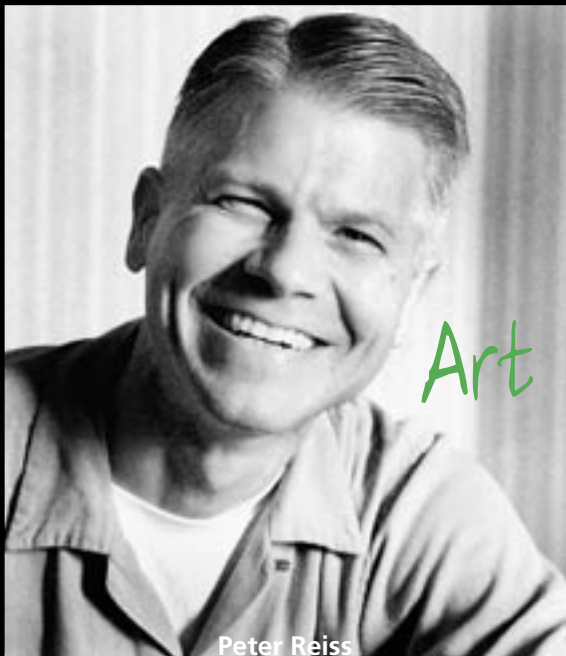
My original idea for this community arts center was to create a family-like environment for young people. I soon realized how profound the arts experience can be for them and how it connects them with the greater world around them. I'm happy to say most of the people working here today came when they were young and now are giving back to their community.

California



Arts Council





Art Is ...

Peter Reiss

August 2004

California



Arts Council



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

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Peter Reiss
Photographer
Los Angeles

I got into photography when I was a kid. My father was a press photographer and he would take me into the dark room on weekends and I'd watch him mix chemicals and develop photos. But I wasn't

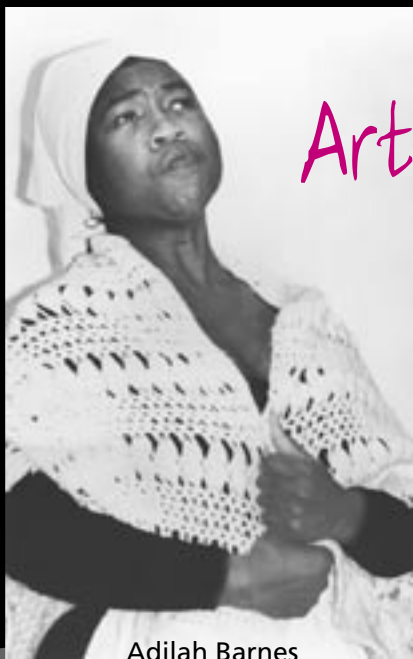
planning to become a photographer until my stroke at age 22. It changed my future. After I recovered I went back to school and got an MA in photography at CalArts. I don't see the world the way other people do. I photograph people who haven't gotten a fair shake in society. People who see my work get a better sense of someone who has a disability. My own disability allows me to have broader ideas of what it is to be a human being. I'm sure it comes through in the pictures. It makes me a better artist, a better photographer.

California



Arts Council





Art Is...

Adilah Barnes

September 2004

California



Arts Council



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
www.cac.ca.gov			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		



Adilah Barnes
Actor and Solo Performer
North Hollywood

My one-woman show, *I That I Am: Woman, Black*, is a journey into the lives of seven African-American women like Zora Neale Hurston, Sojourner Truth, Lorraine Hansberry. It's a celebration of their abilities to overcome tremendous obstacles. Every time I perform I feel the spirits of these women and they guide me every step of the way.

It would be a travesty if these women were not remembered. I performed this show first for senior citizens. They told me "the children need to see this." So I bring my art to African American children who need to know the greatness from whence they come. They need to know they can do anything despite seeming obstacles. If Harriet Tubman could help 300 slaves escape, surely these children can accomplish their goals in this lifetime.

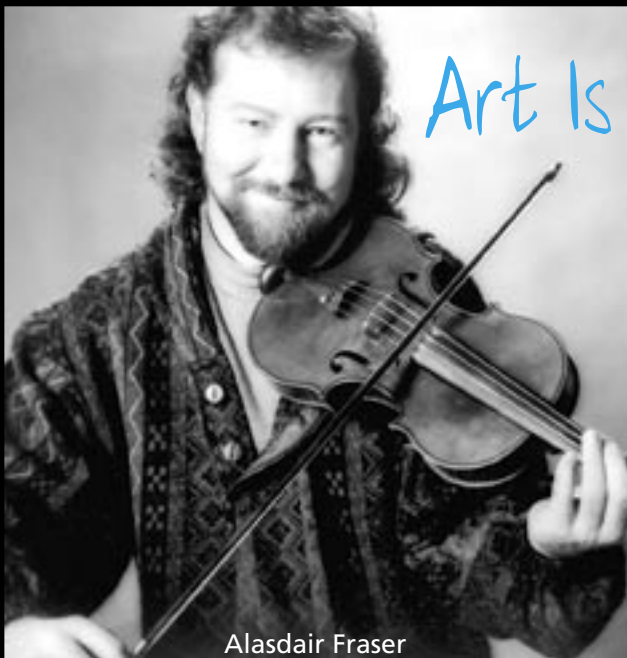
California



Arts Council



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Alasdair Fraser

October 2004

California



Arts Council



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		www.cac.ca.gov			1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24/31	25	26	27	28	29	30



Alasdair Fraser
Scottish Fiddler
Nevada City

I discovered the fiddle when I was eight and found a new way to communicate without using words. The fiddle took me on an incredible journey. It opened doors into the human condition

that I would never have expected. I can play a wild crazy dance tune, then reach into more emotional spaces with ballads and laments. As a musician I feel lucky to put my energies into a tradition with so many energy levels. I feel honored to live on that level and follow the fiddle. The more I find out about my own passion — the fiddle music of Scotland and how it relates to dance — the more I can enter into other cultures. Art communicates across cultures. There are no barriers. I can have intense conversation with musicians from any country. It's a satisfying tapestry that I get to weave with my fiddle.

California



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Photo: Kim Black-Ford



Jean Isaacs

Art Is ...

November 2004

California



Arts Council



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

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Jean Isaacs
Artistic Director
San Diego Dance Theater
San Diego



I like dance to be gorgeous and beautiful, but also inclusive. In my company there is a six-foot woman and a four-and-a-half-foot woman, a Latino and an Apache Indian with white hair. Last year we had a dancer in a wheelchair. I like it that everyone looks different on stage and that the people on stage look like the audience, look like the people in the state of California.

Dance doesn't rely on words, which are culturally specific. Dance is universal. It can illuminate the human condition. Working in dance is incredibly rewarding even in the down times when my body is injured. It's such an affirmation when people stand up and start moving their bodies artistically. I do a lot of cross border work, bringing Mexican artists here, sending choreographers to Tijuana. We're not being new agey about it. Marketing-wise, this is where the next generation of audiences will come from. And I have an appetite for a lot of different kinds of dance.

California



Arts Council





Yukiko Sorrell

Art Is ...

December 2004

California



Arts Council



S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

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Yukiko Sorrell
Traditional Japanese Fabric Artist
San Francisco

At age 84 Yukiko Sorrell has had three careers: as a high school homemaking teacher in Japan and author of the textbook used in the class; as a dressmaker in San Francisco raising two children after her husband died; as a teacher of fabric art for the Institute on Aging. Now she

volunteers at the Japanese Community Center teaching *Shibore*, traditional Japanese tie-dye.

“I teach a group of elderly Japanese who don’t speak English well. Working together on the art allows them to celebrate all the many Japanese festivals. The classes create a warm atmosphere where people work together and remember their youth. I also teach children in summer art camp. I learn from them. They are so creative and not afraid of the results. This work in my retirement is so rewarding. I will never retire from teaching at the JCC.”

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